

Syntactic issues in the English imperative

By Eric Potsdam
Reviewed by Peter Coopmans

Summary by the author

1. Introduction

This dissertation investigates long-standing problems in the syntactic analysis of the English imperative. Much earlier work within the generative tradition has claimed that the syntax of imperatives idiosyncratically and irreducibly differs from that of other English clauses. This work proposes that, on the contrary, the imperative has a largely regular syntax given a conventional conception of English clause structure.

Three phenomena which highlight the putative differences are imperative subjects, the behavior of the auxiliary verbs *have* and *be*, and the structure of negative and emphatic clauses. Below, I present the fundamental issues and outline the proposed analyses and supporting argumentation. In each case, it is claimed that the syntactic behavior in imperatives is unexceptional. Cumulatively, the resolution of these issues provides a picture of the structure and derivation of the English imperative, assimilating them to more-firmly-established analyses of English finite clauses. The particular proposals are couched within the Principles and Parameters framework of the early 1990's although the dissertation attempts to formulate the results in as theory-neutral a way as possible.

2. Imperative Subjects

It is often asserted that imperatives do not have subjects or, if they do, the options are very limited. This contrasts with unrestricted subject possibilities in finite clauses and it constitutes one apparent difference between the two clause types. The dissertation argues that IMPERATIVE NOUN PHRASES (INPs) as italicized in the examples in (1) are true subjects and, thus, that English imperatives, like other clause types, permit a rather wide range of subjects.

- (1) a. *You* take out the trash!
- b. *Those in front* move away from the barricade!
- c. Don't *any of you* get in my way!
- d. *Somebody* do help him, he's drowning!
- e. *Mary* lock the door, *John* scatter the files, and I'll watch the front!

First, the dissertation demonstrates that such INPs have canonical subject properties. They characteristically bear certain kinds of semantic roles, they are more prominent than other arguments, and they can be derived by well-known grammatical operations like passive.

Second, it is argued that INPs are not vocatives. INPs and vocatives are distinct in their intonation contours, anaphoric possibilities, and referent options. This latter difference is illustrated by the contrast between (2) and (3). It is widely known that the referent of a VOCATIVE must be the addressee. This accounts for the ungrammaticality in (2) because the italicized vocatives cannot be the addressee. The referent of INPs is not so restricted and corresponding imperatives in (3) are grammatical. INPs thus are not vocatives.

- (2) a. **Hey, you and Fred*, did no one say to stay out of the construction zone?
- b. **Nobody*, that man just rode off with my bicycle.
- (3) a. *You and Fred* stay out of the construction zone!
- b. *Nobody* ride off with my bicycle!

Third, INPs do not differ from other subjects in their formal or referential possibilities. Several researchers (e.g. Downing, 1969; Schmerling, 1982; Beukema and Coopmans, 1989) have claimed that INPs have sharply restricted semantic options; however, the above examples indicate that INPs may have a wide variety of realizations: *you*, quantificational NPs, indefinites, partitives, definites, and names. The dissertation argues more thoroughly that INPs are essentially unrestricted in this domain.

Lastly, the dissertation shows that INPs behave like subjects syntactically. Evidence from quantifier float, VP ellipsis, adverb placement, and imperatives with

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auxiliaries demonstrate that imperative subjects are in the canonical subject position, the specifier of IP, and have the same derivational history as finite clause subjects are assumed to have. The work thus concludes that INPs are subjects in the standard sense and do not deserve, or require, special syntactic or semantic analyses.

3. Auxiliaries *Have* and *Be*

Imperatives and finite clauses differ in that, in the presence of negation and affirmation, imperatives require periphrastic *do* even with *be* and auxiliary *have*, (4), while finite clauses disallow it, (5).

- (4) a. { **Be not* } afraid!
 b. Do have checked the facts before you start accusing people!
- (5) a. They { *are not* } afraid.
 b. **They DID* have checked the facts.

Chapter 2 of the dissertation argues that this contrast has an explanation in terms of VERB RAISING, or V°-to-I° movement in current theories. As Lasnik 1981 first suggested, auxiliaries in imperatives, like main verbs in finite clauses, do not undergo V°-to-I°. The dissertation develops diagnostics for Verb Raising using VP ellipsis, negation, and adverb placement to confirm this conclusion. If auxiliary verbs do not raise to I° in imperatives and the mechanisms that account for *Do-Support* in finite clauses are extended to imperatives, then the co-occurrence of *do* and auxiliaries in imperatives is straightforwardly accounted for. The contrast between (4) and (5) receives a principled explanation.

4. Non-Neutral Imperatives

A final difference between imperatives and finite clauses is the word order in non-neutral cases. Negative and emphatic imperatives show inverted word order:

- (6) a. Don't anyone open this box!
 b. Don't all of you start talking at once!
 c. Do *SOMEONE* offer him a hand!

The dissertation proposes that this word order is obtained, expectedly, via I°-to-C° movement of *do* or *don't* (collectively *do(n't)*), a proposal first made in Chomsky (1975). It argues against an imperative particle analysis (Cohen, 1976; Zhang, 1990) in which *do(n't)* is an adjunct-like element external to the clause. There are two independent claims in this proposal.

The first claim is that *do(n't)* in imperatives is an inflectional head, just as in finite clauses. This is supported by the fact that imperative *do(n't)* licenses a null VP, a characteristic of inflectional heads (Lobeck, 1995):

- (7) a. Billy didn't tell mom what I did, so don't you ~~tell mom what I did~~ either!
 b. We want everyone to come, so those who can, by all means, do ~~come~~!

The inflectional head analysis of *do(n't)* gains further support in more easily and revealingly extending to first person imperative-like *LET'S-CONSTRUCTIONS* illustrated in (8).

- (8) a. Let's go to the park!
 b. Let's you and me be Simpson characters for Halloween!

The second claim inherent in the proposal is that *do(n't)* originates in I° and moves to C°, deriving the inverted word order. This leads to the expectation that imperatives and yes/no questions, whose derivations uncontroversially also involve I°-to-C°, will show similar syntax. This is confirmed by their parallel behavior with regard to the possibility of Topicalization, which they both permit, in (9), and Negative Preposing, which they both disallow, in (10).

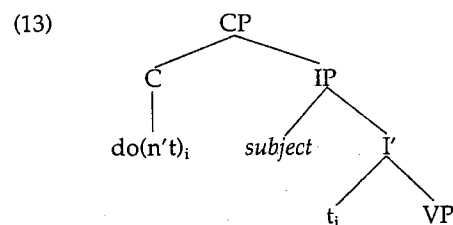
- (9) a. That kind of antisocial behavior can we really tolerate in a civilized society?
 b. My good wine don't anybody touch!
- (10) a. **Only* when I say do they all sing?
 b. **Only* when I say don't everyone sing!

More clearly, implicating I°-to-C° in the derivation of imperatives leads to the expectation that we should see the uninverted word order in which *do(n't)* appear to the right of the subject. Davies (1986) convincingly argues that such imperatives are possible, yielding the word-order alternations in (11) and (12).

- (11) a. Do *EVERYONE* give it a try!
 b. Someone do answer the phone!
- (12) a. Don't anyone touch my stuff!
 b. Everybody don't run out at once!

5. Summary

In defending the position that the English imperative has largely unexceptional syntax, the dissertation arrives at the imperative structure summarized by (13). It emphasizes the conventional nature of imperative syntax: there are no imperative particles, unusual non-subject-like noun phrases, or unprecedented structural elements. The structure and derivation are familiar from other areas of English syntax.



Review by Peter Coopmans

1. Introduction

The thesis of Eric Potsdam's study of the English imperative is succinctly phrased in the preceding summary: "... [it] has largely unexceptional syntax". That is to say, no special structures or unusual elements need to be assumed to account for the various syntactic manifestations that are attested. Their properties are all familiar "from other areas of English syntax".

Stated as such, Potsdam's thesis strikes one as pretty dull: imperatives fit the general picture of English clausal make-up (cf. Beukema and Coopmans', 1989 claim that the imperative can be given a "fairly orthodox syntactic representation"). If this is all there is, where lies the novelty of Potsdam's contribution? Shouldn't this be self-evident? Why has it taken so long to draw this conclusion? Can't we just accept the conclusion and turn to more exciting structures and phenomena in English or elsewhere? Don't, dear colleagues! Instead, everyone have a look at this book, and judge for themselves! Potsdam's route towards this generalisation is anything but dull or self-evident. His dissertation contains a rich presentation of facts and probes to draw parallels between imperatives on the one hand and finite clauses, interrogatives and subjunctives on the other. This leads him to carve up the imperative pie of relevant data differently from earlier accounts, shedding new light on old and stubborn problems, and at the same time trying to reduce construction-specific features to a minimum.

In this review I can barely do justice to the richness of factual observation combined with clarity of argumentation. I'll review some of the claims here that I had some further questions about. Before digging into some theoretical details of his proposal, let us first concentrate on the major factual observations.

2. Review of the main facts

(1)–(7) is an inventory of the core set of imperative possibilities on which Potsdam develops his account of the English imperative. The labels used should speak for themselves.

- (1) *subjectless imperative*
Get me a beer!
- (2) *subject imperative*
Someone get me a beer!
- (3) *emphatic subjectless imperative*
Do get me a beer!
- (4) *negative subjectless imperative*
Don't get me a beer!
- (5) *emphatic subject imperative*
 - a. Do somebody get me a beer!
 - b. Somebody do get me a beer!
- (6) *negative subject imperative*
 - a. Don't anyone touch this stuff!
 - b. Girls go into the hall, Boys don't move!

(7) *formal imperative*

- a. Do not pass up these deals!
- b. *Do you not desert me!
- c. *Do not you open that door!
- d. ?Someone do not abandon the gate!

Note that with the exception of some examples in (7), all instantiations are considered acceptable. The difference between (1) and (2) points to the optionality of an overt subject. This very observation can also be made by comparing (3) and (5), and (4) and (6) respectively. In addition, (5) and (6) show that when an overt subject is present, it can either follow the elements *do/don't*, or precede them. If, for the moment, we put aside the observations in (7), and solely concentrate on what the facts in (1)–(6) tell us, it does not seem very surprising that the English imperative has regular syntax. The familiar clausal template drawn up in Potsdam's summary (his 13), where a subject (overt or null) occupies spec IP, and *do/don't* are either in I or C – the latter possibility most likely as a result of I-to C movement –, provides us with the desired eight instances. What needs to be explained is under which conditions spec IP can be left empty, and which conditions account for the optionality of *do/don't* movement to C. If these questions can be given plausible answers, we should end up with a fairly transparent picture.

Indeed, a picture which any teacher of an introductory class on English syntax could sell to her students, once they have been introduced to the elementary properties of finite declaratives and interrogatives in both their positive and negative forms, e.g. *John drank beer*; *John didn't drink beer*; *Did John drink beer?* and *Didn't John drink beer?* Admittedly, something special would need to be taught about the possibility of null subjects, which one can only marginally point to in the domain of English finite clauses, but a bit of comparative syntax (Italian, Chinese) here would surely suffice. (Potsdam has an insightful section on the licensing of pro as the null subject in examples like (2)–(4).) So, how come these imperatives don't occupy a more central illustrative section in one's favourite textbook on English syntax?

The fact of the matter is that the various structural proposals in the literature on the English imperative have been based on what Potsdam politely calls "limited observations" about the positional, formal and referential possibilities of imperative subjects. The conviction that these possibilities are rather limited has misled some of us into proposing "restrictive analyses" with idiosyncratic features creating a "primary road block to assimilating imperative clauses to more general English clause structure" (p. 164). Potsdam presents the crucial data, both old and new, to make a convincing case for the opposite claim: "an imperative subject is unrestricted in form and reference" (p. 209). If, for example, there are no semantic restrictions on the kinds of overt imperative subjects

that are allowed in English, as Potsdam maintains following Davies (1986) (cf. the examples in (1) of his summary), whatever syntactic licensing allows overt subjects in regular finite clauses may work for imperative clauses as well (but see below). Similarly, if the (b) examples in (5) and (6), with subjects preceding *do/don't*, are taken as just as acceptable as the respective (a) examples with the subjects following, there is no reason to assign special particle status to *do/don't* in (5a, 6a), describing why only these occur and not their inverted counterparts. Treating *do/don't* as auxiliary elements that optionally undergo I-to-C movement will capture both orders in (5) and (6).

Perhaps we have been misled, but we may possibly invoke as an excuse facts such as in (7), which "have typically been at the center of debates over the syntactic analysis of imperatives. They display interesting restrictions and frustrating syntactic inertness that have defied a unified analysis" (p. 355). Here too there is disagreement or uncertainty about the judgments. Overt subjects are traditionally claimed to be ungrammatical in these formal imperatives, as shown for example by (7b) and (7c). A greater range of facts presented by Potsdam in his last chapter on the formal imperative may convince the reader that the real problem lies with (7b). If the problem of the ill-formed sequence **do-subject-not* in imperative constructions can be isolated and receive an explanation independent of the facts in (1)–(6), the overall picture remains transparent and can successfully support the general thesis about imperatives having conventional clausal structure. Potsdam adduces support for the idea that the ill-formedness of **do-subject-not* may be a reflex of a more general PF restriction that *do* and *not* don't like to be separated linearly (8), except as the result of interrogative (I-to-C) inversion (9).

- (8) a. *The butler did apparently not have an alibi
 b. The butler apparently did not have an alibi
 c. *He did just not want to go
 d. He just did not want to go
 e. *Do definitely not tell them where you are from!
 f. Definitely do not tell them where you are from!
- (9) a. Did somebody not tell him?
 b. ?Did not somebody tell him?

Interrogatives differ here from negative declaratives and formal imperatives, and the crucial difference, according to Potsdam, is inversion. He argues that in formal imperatives there is no (I-to-C) inversion, in contrast to what for example is needed to derive cases like (5a) and (6a). The explanation as to why that should be is reviewed later.

3. Overt subjects

Given the imperative possibilities in (1)–(6), Potsdam is able to make his life as a syntactician a lot easier. Assuming that there are no formal or semantic restrictions on imperative subjects, he proposes a

division of labour between the syntactic and pragmatic modules that keeps the syntactic account fairly straightforward. However, it would be unfair to present his strategy here as one of shoving troublesome aspects of form or reference from his syntactic plate, somehow to be stowed under a rug of pragmatic constraints or strategies. Far from it. At various places in his study he draws our attention to discourse-based explanations why in general overt imperative subjects like *you*, or quantificational expressions like *everybody*, sound better than other overt NPs. He discusses in detail the role of "addressee" and its relationship with the referent of the subject of the imperative, and shows that this connection is best characterised in terms of control (building on work by Farkas 1988), and links this notion to the core semantics of an imperative, which is that of bringing about an event.

If there are no unusual constraints on the form or reference of imperative subjects, the immediate question arises what determines the possibility of overt subjects in English imperatives. For example, how is Case assigned to *someone* in example (2)? If the clausal syntax of imperatives parallels that of standard finite clauses, some property of Infl should be responsible for the appearance of overt NPs in its specifier position. Surprisingly, Potsdam is not immediately specific on this rather basic question. There are some general remarks scattered throughout the study, but the specifics are not presented until chapter 4. Indeed, Potsdam takes I to be the Case marker, "the traditional source of Case assignment to the subject in English" (p. 228). Note that it is not at all easy to determine whether this should be nominative Case or something else. Pronominal subjects of imperatives should provide the clue, but the only one that works well is *you*, precisely the pronoun whose shape does not distinguish nominative from accusative. Other pronouns are pretty much unacceptable (p. 251, n. 10).

- (10) a. *Me/I/We/Us stand up!
 b. *Him/he try to run faster!

Potsdam quite rightly remarks that the reason for the unacceptability of these examples may not be a structural one (after all, the pronoun *you* can appear here), but rather one of a pragmatic-informative nature. So, the fact that one normally does not issue imperatives to oneself may perhaps explain the judgment on (10a). (10b) may not be acceptable for lack of sufficient information to identify who is *he/him*. When such information is present, the example sounds better, but to my knowledge, only if the pronoun has the nominative form.

- (11) a. ?He/*Him who stole the eraser put it back immediately!
 b. ?She/*Her who tracked in mud take her shoes off this instant!

If Infl assigns nominative Case to the imperative subject, we cannot possibly hold a tense feature to be responsible (parallel to finite declaratives), because

imperatives are tenseless. If imperative I does not have the relevant features, how come (nominative) Case can be assigned? It is not until p. 270 – in the context of a discussion on imperative *let's* constructions (see below) – that Potsdam spells out the specific source. Infl contains a zero, dependent morpheme – Φ_{imp} , which assigns nominative Case to its specifier, a mechanism which recalls Lasnik's (1981) suggestion that IMP be taken as an alternative to Tense.

Such a special null element in Infl may also remind us of the empty (modal) element M_{subj} alleged to occupy the inflectional head position in subjunctive complements (cf. Roberts 1985), which in all other respects display properties of regular clausal syntax.

- (12) a. The public demands [that [buses M_{subj} be on time]]
 b. Humility requires [that [one M_{subj} not [be proud]]]

As is well known, subjunctive clauses generally parallel with imperatives with regard to phenomena that involve auxiliaries *have* and *be*. For example, unlike their behaviour in normal finite declaratives, these auxiliaries do not undergo V-to-I in imperatives nor in subjunctives. Potsdam's rich empirical presentation of the positions of negation, of adverb placement and VP ellipsis as diagnostics for imperative and subjunctive verb position leaves little room for alternative conclusions here. So, the positions of the sentential adverb *certainly* in (13)–(14) form one of many paired examples by which one can show parallel verbal behaviour, here illustrated with copula *be*.

- (13) a. Definitely be in bed by nine o'clock!
 b. *Be definitely in bed by nine o'clock!
 (14) a. The baby sitter required that the kids definitely be in bed by nine o'clock.
 b. ??The baby sitter required that the kids be definitely in bed by nine o'clock.

In the finite clause in (15) copula *be* immediately precedes the adverb as a result of V-to-I movement.

- (15) The kids were definitely in bed by nine o'clock

If the obligatory nature of V-to-I movement for finite *have/be* is triggered by a property of Infl, the absence of *have/be* movement-to-I in imperatives and subjunctives must either be due to Infl lacking that property or something else already occupying Infl. Potsdam agrees with Roberts (1985) that subjunctives have an empty modal auxiliary, so why is it not possible to assume exactly the same for imperatives? The reason must be that the empty modal in subjunctives blocks the appearance of pleonastic *do* (or *don't*) there (16a). A similar assumption for imperatives would not explain why *don't/do not* can, in fact, must appear in negative imperatives (16b). The inflectional element of the imperative must be an affix, which needs to be supported lexically – if necessary by a form of *do*-support.

- (16) a. *Jack asked that we don't/do not cut down his bean stalk just yet
 b. Don't/ do not cut down the bean stalk just yet!

If a Tense morpheme is responsible for triggering *have/be* raising in finite clauses, and imperatives have a dependent morpheme as well, it remains to explain the absence of *have/be* raising in imperatives in English. Potsdam gives an interesting twist to this dilemma. It is not the absence of verb raising (*have/be*) in imperatives that should be seen as the problem, but rather the fact that verb raising "is confined to a very small, albeit visible corner of English: finite auxiliaries ... [T]he analytical burden is not to explain why raising is absent in numerous situations, in particular imperatives, but rather to explain why it occurs in this one instance. Its absence in imperatives becomes completely unsurprising, supporting the general claim that imperative syntax is not exceptional" (pp. 102–3). I would be happy to draw that conclusion with him, but such an explanation is still forthcoming. Lasnik's (1995) hybrid approach may perhaps pave the way.

A related question occurred to me when I tried to understand the precise role of Infl in imperatives, the nature of Case assignment by a special morpheme, and the complete absence of verb raising. Is there a principled reason to rule out *infinitival* imperatives in English (attested in Dutch or Romance languages like Italian and Spanish)? Infinitival Infl does not have the morphology to attract auxiliary *have/be* and does not have the property of assigning structural Case to an overt subject. If the infinitival clause does occur with an overt subject, Case must have been assigned by some marked mechanism. Such a situation may remind us of the possibility of root infinitives, whose analyses have been extensively discussed in the literature on child language (cf. Wexler, 1994, among others). Dutch has a nice way of showing the existence of two types of imperatives. The regular one (17a), where a feature of Infl (and/or Comp) is responsible for the occurrence of the imperative verb in clause-initial position, which in turn may be followed by an overt or non-overt subject. Alternatively, the imperative verb can be in the infinitival form (with *-en* ending), in clause-final position, again with or without an overt subject (17b,c).

- (17) a. Houd (jij) even je bek dicht!
 Hold (you) for the moment your gob shut
 Now (you) shut your gob!
 b. Iedereen even zijn bek houden!
 Everyone for the moment his gob hold
 Now everyone shut their gob!
 c. Nou even je bek houden!
 Now for the moment your gob hold
 Now shut your gob!

Because English has rigid VO order and lacks overt infinitival suffixation, we can't tell whether infinitival imperatives are attested. The possibility of overt

subjects is not a principled reason to rule out such an analysis as one underlying subject imperatives like (2). This is shown by (17b). At present, I can't think of any principled argument to dismiss such an analysis. If they do not exist in English, their absence must be due to some property of Infl, no doubt the one that is also responsible for the occurrence of support *do*. Or could it be that English has imperatives with and without zero imp morphemes?

4. Optional movement of *do/don't*

The facts in (5) and (6), repeated here, show that if the overt subject in all these instances is in spec IP – and Potsdam presents detailed argumentation that this the case – it must be the mobility of auxiliary *do/don't* that is responsible for the alternative word orders. More precisely, it is plausible to assume that *do/don't* in the (b) examples are in I, and moved to C in the (a) counterparts. (I will follow Potsdam and call this imperative inversion.)

- (5) a. Do somebody get me a beer!
 b. Somebody do get me a beer!
- (6) a. Don't anyone touch this stuff!
 b. Girls go into the hall, Boys don't move!

The obvious question arises why imperative inversion should be triggered in the first place, and why it should be optional. Although I-to-C movement finds its parallel in the way finite interrogative clauses are derived – e.g. *John didn't go home* and *Didn't John go home?* – there are crucial differences. I-to-C movement is necessary to derive interrogatives, not so for imperatives.

Potsdam's main claim here is that imperative inversion is semantically driven (p. 388). If I-to-C movement is generally triggered by the need to formally check a strong feature in C (Q perhaps in interrogatives), a similar feature, say IMP, could be assumed to trigger movement in (5a/6a). The very fact that movement is optional suggests that IMP may be there in C, but doesn't have to be. It is also important to note here that if imperative inversion takes place, it only applies to emphatic *do* and negative *don't*. Unemphatic *do* alone (as in the formal imperatives in 7) doesn't move to C (hence the ungrammaticality of 7b). This suggests that imperative inversion is not a reflex of a purely formal checking requirement. It only applies to "semantically contentful inflectional heads", whose features are exclusively associated with affirmation and negation. Potsdam speculates that this could be captured by assuming that checking of a strong IMP feature (if it is present in C) is done by the categorial feature Σ , marking polarity (Laka, 1990). In his last chapter he carefully shows how the different orders can be derived, and keeps stressing the parallelism with finite interrogatives (positive or negative). His attempt at showing the parallelism is successful to the extent that he can show that the different orders can be captured by a head-head

relationship, driven by a form of feature checking. Beyond that the parallelism breaks down. In interrogatives it is a formal feature of Infl, perhaps V, that is blindly attracted by a Q operator in C. In imperatives it is a formally represented semantic feature attracted by IMP.

Although Potsdam's cleverly designed system allows him to capture the optionality of *do/don't* movement, it does not yet explain why optionality should exist. Why should an IMP feature be necessary in C, if one can form imperatives (neutral, affirmative, negative) without having recourse to C? Is there perhaps a hidden semantic difference between the versions in (5) and (6)? Something remains not quite satisfactory here. Let me stress, though, that I find this a virtue of his proposal, which allows one to raise this very question in the first place. It is a nice outcome of Potsdam's careful distinction between the different roles that support *do* takes on in emphatic, negative and formal imperatives.

These two points of criticism can be illustrated together in the context of Potsdam's very interesting account of the *let's* imperative construction (see ex. (8) of his summary)

- (18) a. Let's go to the park!
 b. Let's you and me be Simpson characters for Halloween!

In certain dialects the *let's* imperative can be formed with an overt subject (18b). Potsdam nicely shows how *let's* should be analysed as an element of the category Infl (like *don't*, for example). However, as (18b) shows, it precedes the subject in spec IP. Imperative inversion must take place, since we cannot get **You and me let's be Simpson characters for Halloween!*. What remains unexplained is why *don't/do* optionally undergo I-to-C movement in (5)/(6), and *let's* obligatorily. Potsdam (p. 303, n. 22) notes this, but adds that the result itself can be achieved mechanically under a feature attraction analysis (the strong feature IMP can't be absent from C here). It is unclear to me what exactly makes *let's* a "semantically contentful inflectional head", such that its categorial feature can be attracted by IMP. Potsdam observes that *let's* constructions have "largely the structure of non-neutral imperatives" (p. 266), and he can mechanically account for this by treating *let's* on a par with negative *don't* or emphatic *do*. The mechanics can be shown to derive the correct word order. However, the semantic rationale for treating these inflectional elements as of the same class remains somewhat mysterious.

Potsdam advocates a strong thesis, that no special particles nor ad hoc rules need to be assumed for the various manifestations of the syntactic imperative. They can be accounted for in terms of familiar clause-structural properties: I-to C movement, *do*-support, Case as a form of spec-head agreement, to name a few. Yet, the assumed inflectional features still remain specific to imperatives: a null imp morpheme that can assign Case, a strong IMP attractor in C for specific

categorial features, such as Σ . They give rise to the deeper question whether these form the smallest construction-specific pieces of the imperative puzzle that need to be stipulated. The very formulation of that deeper question is the result of a theoretically very interesting proposal.

5. Conclusion

Potsdam's study on the various syntactic instantiations of the English imperative is a book that I would not only recommend to those specifically interested in the syntax and pragmatics of imperatives but also to anyone interested in English clausal syntax more generally. It is rich in detail, clear in analysis and argumentation, forceful in empirical claims. As a case study it provides an excellent introduction to current syntactic theorising, which I would suggest considering seriously when you draw up the syllabus of next year's syntax course.

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